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- Healthcare

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Representative
Tami Green

FALL 2005

Legislative Report to the 28th District

Dear Neighbors,

Recently we finished my first legislative session in Olympia and it was an honor to serve as your representative from the 28th district.

The past session was quite a learning experience and I worked hard to represent the values of our district. I voted to hold the line against new taxes, including the gas tax and fought to bring greater accountability to our state government.

My focus remains creating jobs while finding ways to lower healthcare costs and improve our educational system.

I am proud of the work I have done. Government needs to be accountable to the people it represents. It needs to balance its checkbook and live within its means.

In this report you will find information on some of the major issues that I was involved in. I'm interested in what you think and invite you to contact my office with opinions and thoughts on what we have done or what you would like us to do in the future.

Again, thank you for the honor and privilege of representing you in the Legislature.

Sincerely,

Tami Green
State Representative
28th Legislative District

PS – To stay updated on the very latest legislative news, subscribe to my electronic legislative newsletter. Just send me an email and I'll make sure you get all the latest news.

Prescription Drugs

The cost of many prescription drugs in the U.S. are astronomical compared to what other countries pay. Over 700,000 Washington residents, including an estimated 210,000 seniors, don't have prescription drug coverage and have to buy prescriptions at full retail price.

This year we passed legislation to expand the state's prescription drug purchasing consortium to allow uninsured Washingtonians – as well as private businesses and other organizations – to become eligible for Costco-like bulk purchasing discounts (SB 5471). Recent reports show that a similar program the state enacted in 2003 is expected to save tax payers \$100 million over the next 2 years. The Health Care Authority expects our new Prescription Drug Purchasing Consortium will help 81,000 senior citizens and 122,000 younger uninsured individuals save money on their prescription medicines. I voted YES on this much needed reform.

I also sponsored a bill (HB 1168) to license Canadian pharmacies here in Washington State to ensure that prescription drugs, should the federal government approve re-importation, meet our country's safety standards. Another bill I supported (HB 1316) would allow us to import prescription drugs from licensed Canadian wholesalers, if the federal government approves. The Senate version (SB 5470) passed.



*It is vital we
continue to
fund education
so our children
can succeed.*

Supporting Education

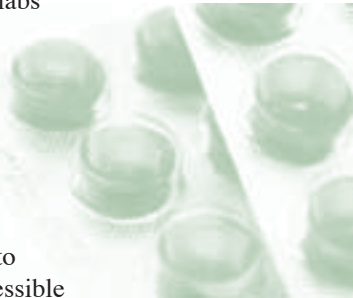
The 2005 Legislature dramatically improved support for public schools, which will significantly help students and teachers, ultimately improving our children's likelihood of future success.

- After two years of being suspended due to lack of funds, the people's teacher-salary and class-size initiatives (I-728 & I-732) are fully funded for 2005-07.
- New Learning Assistance Program reforms will help Pierce County schools by targeting funding to school districts with large numbers of low-income families.
- Special Education funding reforms also benefit Pierce County schools.

Overall, the 2005 Legislature increased state funding for Washington's public schools by \$981 million – about \$468 per student. This means an estimated \$50 million in additional funding for our Pierce County schools. I'm grateful to the P.T.A., teachers, concerned parents and others who supported our efforts to make 2005 a great year for children and public schools.

Fighting the Meth Epidemic

Methamphetamine addiction destroys lives, but meth labs threaten more than the addicts. Using chemicals from common medications, meth labs create toxic threats to children, property and communities as well as imposing huge cleanup costs on taxpayers. This year the legislature passed a law that restricts access to the cold and allergy medications used to “cook” meth. It will limit purchases of these products to two packages in a 24 hour period; require retailers to keep these products in locations where they are inaccessible without assistance; and require buyers to show a photo ID and sign a log that law enforcement can use to identify excessive purchases. A similar law in Oklahoma reduced meth lab incidents by 80 percent.



Progress House Update

Over the past year I have been working hard to prevent the relocation of the work release program called Progress House onto the grounds of Western State Hospital. Progress House is a privately run halfway house that contracts with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to house 69 male and 6 female high risk offenders.

This past session I proposed legislation to block the location of this facility onto the hospital grounds. Further the city of Lakewood recently issued a moratorium blocking the advancement of the D.O.C. proposal. Currently the D.O.C. is evaluating alternative site locations, but unfortunately a court appeal has been filed to lift the current moratorium.

Next January I plan to reintroduce my legislation to bar this program from being located into an area that has 4 schools and 2 day care centers within a 1 mile radius. This process needs to be an open process and any decision needs to be made with the full input of the community. If you would like to continue to be updated on the status of this issue please send me an email at tami.green@leg.wa.gov or give my legislative office a call.

State Investments for Local Needs

As a member of the Capital Budget Committee, I worked hard to make sure that Pierce County got its fair share out of the State’s Capital Budget. Low interest rates made this a good time for capital investments. I’m happy to report we succeeded in securing needed state funding to:

- Improve the outdated sewer systems in Dupont. (\$2 million)
- Renovate and maintain the headquarters for the Washington State National Guard.
- Upgrade the Tacoma Central Treatment Plant, saving local property taxpayers millions. (\$26 million)
- Renovate Clover Park Technical and Pierce College campuses. (\$12 million)
- Maintain the Chambers Creek Salmon Hatchery Program. (\$2 million)
- Repair the McNeil Island correctional facility. (\$3 million)
- Build a new science facility at Tacoma Community College. (\$32 million)

In all, more than \$45 million in projects are funded throughout the 28th district to help improve our quality of life.

Fiscal Responsibility

A balanced state budget
I voted YES for a balanced budget that invests in education, health care and other needs without increasing general sales, business or property taxes. Key investments include:

- Raising funding for public schools by \$468 per student – fully funding the people’s class-size and teacher salary initiatives (I-732, I-728).
- Enabling 38,000 more children to receive health care.
- Opening college doors to 7,900 additional students.
- Significantly improving mental health treatment.
- Improving long-term care funding, while reducing the nursing home bed tax.
- Saving food assistance for more than 11,000 state residents – mostly senior citizens.
- I fought for \$462,000 to ensure treatment for infant disorders detected through newborn screening. Treating these disorders before they cause lifelong disability, retardation or early death will prevent enormous family and public costs.



Independent performance audits
Taxpayers deserve more accountability and efficiency in state spending. I sponsored and voted YES for the new Independent Performance Audit law. State Auditor Brian Sonntag called it “one of the most significant actions ever by the Legislature to ensure accountability in state government.” (HB 1064)



We’ve moved!

We have opened a new district office in order to better to serve you!
WHERE: 3675 Bridgeport Way, Suite B, University Place, WA 98466
PHONE: (253) 534-3231 **EMAIL:** green.tami@leg.wa.gov

Helping Schools and Families

\$100 million helps schools and taxpayers
By allowing existing real estate excise taxes to increase state bonding capacity for school construction, we added \$100 million of state assistance for local school construction without raising taxes. This will get more children out of overcrowded classrooms and portables at much less cost to local property tax levies. YES. (HB 2170)

Uniting resources for early learning
The Washington Early Learning Council will unify and expand early learning opportunities for children from birth to age 5. Bringing state policies in line with scientific research on effective early learning is one of the best things we can do for Washington’s children. YES. (HB 1152, sponsor)



Improving Health and Health Care

Mental health reform
I was extremely proud to sponsor the Mental Health Parity bill. This reform will directly help 900,000 Washington residents who have been treated unfairly by insurance plans that arbitrarily limit mental health treatment or charge unreasonable co-pays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums. Indirectly, parity helps everyone, because untreated mental illness imposes staggering costs on taxpayers and businesses. YES. (HB 1154, sponsor)

Health care for all children
We made a commitment to ensure all Washington kids have health care coverage by 2010. It’s the right thing to do for children and our future. As a first step, we expanded health care coverage to 38,000 more children in low-income families. YES. (HB 1441, sponsor)

Helping seniors and the disabled in nursing homes
The income of elderly and disabled citizens in publicly-funded nursing homes goes to the cost of their care. Until now, they could only keep \$42.62 a month for clothes, shampoo, batteries or other personal expenses. I’m proud I helped increase this by \$10 per month – the first increase in 17 years. YES. (Budget item, same as HB 1773 which I sponsored)

Jobs and the Economy

Job Development Fund
A new Job Development Fund will provide grants (not loans) to help local investments in job-producing infrastructure. These funds are a win-win for the state. By helping local government the State can ensure that Washington remains a great place to do business. YES. (HB 1903, sponsor)

Local Investment = Jobs
A recent University of Washington study estimates that for every \$1 million that is spent in construction by a public or private entity 30.8 jobs are created. Using this model this year’s Capital Budget will create approximately 95,000 jobs with an additional 37,000 jobs created with local matching funds.

Supporting Veterans

Property Tax relief for Widows & Widowers of Veterans
Having been raised in an active duty family I understand first hand the hardships our soldiers and families must endure during a time of war. I sponsored a bill which would offer a property tax exemption to widows or widowers of honorably discharged veterans. I was glad to see this legislation signed into law. YES. (HB 1509)

Tuition Relief for Veterans
I sponsored a measure to expand tuition waivers colleges and universities can offer for families of American veterans killed or totally disabled in action. Also eligible would be families of veterans listed as missing in action or listed as prisoners of war. YES. (HB 1174)



Election Reform

Real election reform
I heard citizen concerns about the 2004 elections and supported election reforms to ensure the problems will not be repeated. These were controversial measures, and we have more work to do. I was particularly proud of a bill that I sponsored that authorizes Secretary of State Sam Reed to perform periodic audits of county election offices around the state (HB 1749). Other measures we passed include.

- A new statewide voter database to cross-check for felons or others voting illegally, and severe penalties for illegal voting (SB 5743). YES.
- Giving counties the option of all-mail voting (HB 1754). YES.
- Requiring voter ID at the polls, statewide standards for verifying voter signatures, and improved ballot security (SB 5499). YES.
- Requiring voting machines to produce a paper trail (SB 5395). YES.